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INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

BERTA E. HERNÁNDEZ*

I could not resist the invitation to introduce Gerald Torres, because he and I go way back. I am not going to say how far back, but I will say that we started in teaching together in 1982, when there were only twenty-two Latinos and Latinas in total who were teaching in fulltime, tenure track positions in all the law schools in the United States. Even back then, when there were only twenty-two of us, we all knew Gerald was going to go places.

He certainly has not let us down, and he keeps inspiring us. But I remember, as if it were yesterday, a day last year when we saw him standing with the President of the United States, about to become one of a handful of men and women in a high level position in the new administration. As soon as the presentation was over, I can tell you that phone wires were burning coast to coast speaking our pride and excitement at having Gerald be one of our guiding lights.

Gerald, as you know, is counsel to Attorney General Janet Reno at the Department of Justice and has primary responsibility for advising her on environmental policy and law. He has been there since December of 1993. Other than that, he has had an illustrious career, even as young as he is.

He has been a professor at the University of Minnesota and currently, while at the Justice Department, he is on leave from the University of Texas School of Law.

Throughout his career his commitment and devotion to real issues, real environmental issues that affect real people all the time, has been something that has set him apart from the rest. He is

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one of the first scholars ever to address the issue of environmental racism, and with that, I leave you with Gerald.

I'm proud to introduce you, Gerald.